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# Senate hearing to address Libby cleanup

Missoulian State Bureau

HELENA - A U.S. Senate subcommittee will discuss asbestos cleanup and ongoing health concerns in Libby on Thursday during a hearing led by Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., the senator said Monday.

Hundreds of people in Libby have become ill, and at least 200 have died, because of asbestos contamination at the former W.R. Grace and Co. vermiculite mine there. Tremolite asbestos was a contaminant of the vermiculite ore, which was used in the production of Zonolite home insulation.

Since 1999, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been working on an emergency basis to remove asbestos from soils and buildings at the mine site and in town. Earlier this year, Gov.

*'We must keep up the fight to provide Libby with a true clean bill of health.'*

**- Sen. Max Baucus,  
D-Mont.**

Judy Martz used Montana's lone "silver bullet" to request that the agency put Libby on the fast track for Superfund designation, an announcement expected by the end of this year.

In addition to the ongoing emergency cleanup work and the pending Superfund designation, the EPA announced in May that it would be removing Zonolite insulation from Libby-area homes to prevent further exposure to asbestos among townspeople who had already

been exposed to unusually high levels of the fiber.

"I applaud the EPA's decision to remove contaminated insulation from Libby homes, but we must keep up the fight to provide Libby with a true clean bill of health," Baucus said in a press release Monday. "I requested the Senate hearing in a subcommittee of the Environment and Public Works Committee to ensure that Libby gets the funding and support it needs to recover from the damage caused by W.R. Grace Mine."

Baucus said he will also use the hearing to talk about the lessons learned from Libby and how the federal government can prevent a similar situation in the future.

The hearing will begin at 7 a.m. MDT. Witnesses will include Dr. Brad Black and nurse Pat Cohan from the Libby Clinic for Asbestos Related Disease, as well as state Medical Officer Dr. Michael Spence and Lincoln County Commissioner John Konzen.